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RECENT ARCHÆOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN PERSIA.

I.

The attention of archæologists has recently been drawn to the antiquities and monuments of Persia, through the researches and discoveries of M. Dieulafoy, charged by the French government with a mission to the East. For about three centuries numerous travellers have visited Persia and have signalized the important ruins which cover the southern provinces of the country; but no one, until now, had studied and classified scientifically the ancient monuments of Iran, or carried on methodical excavations on sites that promised to yield interesting discoveries.

This is hardly the moment to recall the principal travellers who have been attracted by the archæological riches of Persia. As early as the close of the XVI century, the Bolognese architect Sebastiano Serlio, on the strength of reports of Catholic missionaries, thought himself able to make a tentative restoration of the palaces of Persepolis. A little later, Don Garcias de Sylva de Figueroa (1574–1628), ambassador of Philip III to the Shah Abbas the Great, visited the ruins of Persepolis, in describing which he dwelt particularly on the cuneiform inscriptions. In 1602, Stephen Kakasch, ambassador of the Emp. Rudolph II, wrote a description of Persia, the text of which has quite recently been published by M. Schefer, under the title *Iter persicum* (Paris, Leroux, 1877). In 1621, a Roman, Pietro della Valle, brought back from Persepolis to Father Kircher the copy of a fragmentary cuneiform inscription: probably the first cuneiform letters seen in Europe. About thirty years later, Thévenot visited Persia and described it; but none of these travellers had the critical sense of Chardin (1681), or showed as much care in the description of the ruins. After him may be hastily enumerated: Struys in 1681; Flower in 1693; Hyde in 1700; Cornelius Van Bruyn in 1704; Tavernier in 1712; Kœmpfer in 1712; Otter in 1748; Niebuhr in 1765; and, at the end of the last or the beginning of this century, Ouseley; abbé de Beauchamp; Jaubert; Dupré (1808); more recently, Ker-Porter in 1818; Tessier in 1840; Coste and Flandin in 1841; W. Loftus in 1852; and finally the Comte de Gobineau.

In 1874 the German government sent to Persia an epigraphic and archæological expedition under the direction of Dr. Andreas, of Kiel, and Dr. F. Stolze. The scientific results of the German mission are, as yet, only very incompletely known. Still, the fifth international Congress of Orientalists, held at Berlin, decided that the archæological photographs taken by Messrs. Andreas and Stolze should be published. The first volume of the extensive publication appeared in 1882¹: it must be confessed that it is a real deception as well for archæologists as for Orientalists. The photographs are defective, and were evidently taken by persons with very little care for archæology. But little account is to be taken of this album, as costly as it is useless.

A peculiar contrast is the book which M. Dieulafoy has devoted to the ancient art of Persia, where the author codifies the results of his observations in the province of Fars, along the Persian Gulf.² In Farsistan are grouped the most important monuments of the ancient civilizations that flourished in Persia: there lie overthrown the palaces of Persepolis, of Murghâb, of Shiraz, of Shahpûr, of Darabgerd, of Naksh-i-Rustam, and of Firuzabad. Travellers have many times described these ruins, but what was still necessary was to ascertain their exact age, their architectural characteristics; to clearly disengage what, in these monuments, belongs to each one of the dynasties that succeeded each other in the country. M. Dieulafoy starts with the valley of Polvar-Rûd, the ancient Medos, where, in the neighborhood of Meshed-Murghâb and Mader-i-Suleiman, villages on the road from Ispahan to Shiraz, are the remains of a city built by the first Akhæmenid dynasty, anterior to Darius I. It was after his victory over Astyages that the great Cyrus built the palace of Meshed-Murghâb and the sepulchral monuments, such as the tomb of his father Cambyses I and the Gabr-i-Mader-i-Suleiman, "the tomb of the mother of Solomon," in the valley of Polvar, situated on the borders of Persia proper and recently subdued Media. The city of Cyrus was abandoned when Darius founded Persepolis, a little further on, in the plain of the Merdash. The ruins of the Polvar valley represent, then, the most ancient period of Persian art, and the first questions that arise are: Where did this art come from? In what was it original?

¹*Persepolis. Die achaemenidischen und sassanidischen Denkmäler und Inschriften von Persepolis, Istakhr, Pasargadae, Shahpur, zum ersten male photographisch aufgenommen, von F. Stolze, in Anschluss an die epigraphisch-archæologische Expedition in Persien von F. C. Andreas. Herausgegeben auf veranlassung des fünften internationalen orientalistischen Congresses zu Berlin, mit einer Besprechung der Inschriften von Th. Nöldeke. Erster Band, Berlin, Asher, 1882, in f°.*

²*L'Art antique de la Perse. Achéménides, Parthes, Sassanides, par Marcel Dieulafoy. Paris, Des Fosse, 1884. Four out of five parts have already appeared.*

What did it borrow from other civilizations, and what are these civilizations?

Whatever originality is shown by Persian art under Cyrus is conditioned by the peculiarities of soil and climate under which it was produced and developed. There is no water in Persia, and this explains the scarcity of trees and, consequently, the lack of wood for building purposes. In the mountainous districts an intense cold prevails, and in the plain a tropical heat unequalled, perhaps, in the world. The natives were therefore constrained to build dwellings suited to protect them from both extremes: they succeeded in doing so without the use of wood, by means of vaults and terraces. "These special conditions of soil and climate," says M. Dieulafoy, "gave rise to a special architecture, and as it prevented the development of any foreign importation which was not adapted to local requirements, exaggerated in Persia that law of immutability which seems to have been imposed by destiny on all the nations of the East." Now, the geological and climatic conditions of Persia led the inhabitants to construct their dwellings on artificial terraces, and to cover them with brick vaults and cupolas. It was the Iranians who invented the cupola with pendentives and the vaulted naves, long before the architects of Byzantium or the West. Their constructions, doubtless, are quite rude, but contain all the principles which it was sufficient to develop in order to attain to the marvellous cupolas of Santa Sophia.

The terrace, the vault and the cupola are, then, at all periods and through all revolutions the essentially original and invariable characteristics of the popular architecture of Persia, as opposed to the official architecture, with its imported foreign elements. But, as early as the time of the first Akhæmenid dynasty, there exist in Persia artistic or architectural elements that are not prescribed by the natural conditions of the country, and are consequently of foreign origin. An analysis of the monuments of Meshed-Murghâb discloses the fact that they bear the closest affinity to Greek monuments, especially to those on the coast of Asia Minor. Some, like the Takht, the Gabr, the ruined palace, resemble Greek constructions; others, like the sepulchral towers, recall Lykian constructions. No sign of the influence of Egypt and Assyria; not a profile, not a detail of the mouldings, not the least ornament the prototype of which can be found on the banks of the Euphrates or the Nile. Even the idea of building on an artificial platform belongs as much to Lykia and Asia Minor, as it does to Elam or Chaldæa.

But are the monuments of Meshed-Murghâb the prototypes of the Greco-Lykian edifices, or did the Akhæmenids borrow their architecture from the inhabitants of the coast of Asia Minor? It is easy to prove, historically, that the Akhæmenids were the imitators. Before the reign

of Cyrus, the Persians had never had direct and continued relations with the Greeks, from whom they were separated by the Assyrian Empire; the processes and laws of Greek architecture could have reached the valley of the Polvar only by a slow and gradual propagation through Asia Minor and the Assyrian Empire. In this case, we should necessarily find in Assyria monuments similar in their art to the Greek and Akhæmenid constructions. Nothing of the sort has been found: we must then conclude, with M. Dieulafoy, that "the nation that owed to the other its processes of construction, borrowed them only on the day when the Aryans of the South and the Hellenes met for the first time on the battle-fields of Lydia."

Long before the capture of Sardis by Cyrus, we find in Greek monuments, such as the temples of Egesta and Selinous in Sicily, and of Samos, the essential elements of the architecture of the palaces of Meshed-Murghâb; a certain proof that the Persians learned from the Ionian Greeks the secret of their art: the towers of Meshed-Murghâb and of Naksh-i-Rustam show the strongest analogies with the tombs of Myra, of Antiphellos, and with the tomb of the Harpies, at Xanthos in Lykia.

The constructions of the Polvar-Rûd valley are anterior to the expedition of Cambyzes to Egypt, for they bear no traces of Egyptian influence. The trilingual inscriptions in Persian, Median and Assyrian, found there, prove, on the other hand, that the language of Nineveh had already obtained an official position at the court of the king of Persia at the time of the construction of the palace at Meshed-Murghâb; it follows, that these buildings are posterior to the taking of Babylon by Cyrus, and the king who built them was in reality the Great Cyrus, and not Cyrus the younger as some had supposed. At the same time a confirmation is given to the genealogy of the Akhæmenids, who reigned in two branches over Persia, the branch of Cyrus, and that of Darius. The archaeological studies of M. Dieulafoy are, then, useful for history, as well as for archæology. I will not speak of the question of the geographical identification and the establishing of the sites of the two Pasargadæ, a subject of considerable importance but rather beyond my scope.

Persepolis, on the other hand, belongs entirely to the second Akhæmenid dynasty, that of Darius. The latter prince transported the capital of the Empire from Murghâb, in the Merdash plain, to the south of the gorges of Polvar-Rûd; and the ruins of the palaces and tombs raised by his dynasty have given fame to the modern localities of Takt-i-Jemshid, Istakhr, Naksh-i-Radjeb, Hadj-Abad, Naksh-i-Rustam. The Persepolitan palaces are built of brick, with the exception of the columns, doors, windows and staircases; there still remain standing cannellated columns about twenty metres high: the great throne-hall (*apadana*) of the palace

of Xerxes had a hundred columns; the walls were covered with revetments of differently-colored enamelled bricks and decorated with bas-reliefs. "Persepolitan architecture differs from that of Meshed-Murghâb only in the addition of Egyptian motifs, transferred to stone by a school of sculptors imbued with the best Greek traditions." It is certain that Egyptian influence was introduced into Persepolis in consequence of the conquest of Egypt by the Persians. Though in the construction of the palaces it is met with only in details, it produces, on the other hand, a radical revolution in the sepulchral architecture, which experienced an abrupt change between the first and second Akhæmenid dynasties. Under Cyrus and his successors it takes the form of isolated square tombs like those of Lykia; after Darius, the kings excavated *hypogea* in the face of the rocks, like those of the Pharaohs. We will not follow M. Dieulafoy in his attempt to define what might be called the *Persepolitan order*—the Greek volute surmounted by the bicephalic Egyptian capital—or in his study on the origin of the Greek orders, to which he brings a contingent of new elements and ingenious views.

The fifth part of M. Dieulafoy's important work is still to be published, and will include the Parthian and Sassanid monuments and sculptures, and the origin of Mussulman art. The author will doubtless show that the Arabs borrowed all the elements of their architecture from the monumental art of Iran under the Akhæmenids and Sassanids. In the mean time, we will follow M. Dieulafoy in another field, and speak of the results of the excavations which he has undertaken for the French government in the ruins of Susa, the ancient capital of Elam.

II.

In 1851 General Williams and Sir William K. Loftus visited the ruins of Susa, and commenced excavations which were interrupted after a few days by the hostility of the inhabitants. Loftus has given an account of his journey and its scientific results in his interesting volume, *Travels and researches in Chaldæa and Susiana* (London, 1857, in 8vo.). Since then, although the mounds have been visited by different travellers, no excavations have been attempted: they are made difficult both on account of the extreme heat and the fanaticism of the Shiis, who hold in great veneration the neighboring so-called *Tomb of Daniel*.

M. Dieulafoy solicited and obtained from the French government the mission of resuming and carrying out the work only sketched out by the English travellers. We trust that fanaticism will not prevent him and his brave companions from prosecuting the perilous enterprise which he has begun with success. Susa is, with Nineveh and Babylon, one of the

most ancient cities of the world, and the study of the monuments that must be found among its ruins cannot fail to throw quite a new light on the origin of the ancient civilizations of the East. After a successful campaign, during last winter, M. Dieulafoy has made known the first results of his mission in a summary report,³ from which is taken the greater part of the following details.

The citadel and palaces of Susa form to-day a rhomboid tumulus of about one hundred square hectares (= 200 acres). One of the numerous mounds, which together form this tumulus, represents an Akhæmenid monument, the palace of Artaxerxes. In the trench opened on this site there were found all the fragments of a bicephalic capital of colossal dimensions, which, when erected in the galleries of the Louvre, will be the only example of Persepolitan architecture, adequate and exceptionally beautiful, that exists in a European museum.

The special object, in this first campaign, was to reconnoitre the ground, sink shafts in the ruins, and lay bare the walls that determine the arrangement of the palaces and fortifications. This preliminary work has already brought to light a large number of objects in ivory, bronze, alabaster and terracotta. Of especial interest are eighty-eight Elamite seals in *pietra-dura*. "The most beautiful of these intagli is a conical seal of a grayish violet opal. It is of rare beauty, and was doubtless engraved for an Akhæmenid king, Xerxes or Artaxerxes I. . . . The medallion of the king, surmounted by the supreme divinity Ahura-Mazda, is placed between two sphinxes wearing the white crown of Upper-Egypt."

From one of the trenches came an enormous quantity of enamelled bricks, or rather squares of enamelled concrete, from the revetment of a palace wall. On being joined together they were found to form a superb lion in bas-relief, 1.75 met. high, placed between two flowered friezes, on one of which was painted a cuneiform inscription of Darius. Other fragments of the same nature showed that there was originally a procession of nine lions in bas-relief set off by lively and decided colors, which formed the external decoration of an Akhæmenid portico.

In the fortifications of the Elamite gate, that is to say in constructions dating from the earliest civilization that had its centre in Susa, there was found a fragment of a panel of enamelled bricks possessing the greatest historical interest. "These bricks belonged to a panel on which was represented a figure richly dressed in a green robe, overlaid with yellow, blue, and white embroidery, and in a tiger's skin; and carrying a golden cane or lance. The most singular point is that the figure, of which

³*Revue Archéologique*, July-August, 1885.

I have found the lower part of the face, the beard, neck and hand, is black. The lip is thin, the beard abundant, and the embroideries of the garments, most archaic in character, seem to be the work of Babylonian workmen." Other enamelled bricks have been found: "two feet with gilt shoes; a well-drawn hand, with a wrist covered with bracelets and fingers that grasp the long bâton which became under the Akhæmenidæ the emblem of supreme power; another piece of a robe emblazoned with the arms of Susa, partly hidden under a tiger's skin; finally, a flowered frieze with a brownish background. The head and feet were black, and it was even apparent that the entire decoration had been planned so as to accord with the dark tone of the figure."

M. Dieulafoy even recognizes in the physiognomy of this black king of Susa, for it is unmistakably a king, the characteristics of the Ethiopian race. Now this discovery is of capital importance: it connects itself with a tradition preserved among the Greeks and even the Romans, and to which modern criticism has always refused to accord the least historical value. In the *Odyssey* we find, twice cited, a person by the name of Memnon, called "the Son of the Dawn" and "the handsomest of warriors." He is given as the son of Tithonos, the brother of Priam, and he comes from the East with Sarpedon to the assistance of Troy besieged by the Greeks. Hesiod calls Memnon "king of the Ethiopians," that is, king of the men with dark faces.⁴

Besides, we know positively that for the Greeks there were two Ethiopias, one in Asia, beyond the Tigris, that is to say in Elam itself; the other in Africa, at the sources of the Nile. It is hardly necessary to recall the poems of Pindar and Simonides, that sing the fabulous exploits of the black king Memnon, the hero of Asiatic Ethiopia. We will only remark, borrowing the expression of Letronne, that "the kingdom of Memnon was placed in Susiana where his father Tithonos had built Susa; which accords with the tradition followed by Aiskylos, as, according to this poet, Kissia, the country of which Susa was the capital, was thus named from Kissia, the mother of Memnon. According to another tradition, Tithonos was but a satrap of Persia, subject to the king of Assyria Teutamos, who held Troy under his sovereignty. This satrap sent his son Memnon at the head of a hundred thousand Ethiopians, as many Susianians, and ten thousand chariots, to assist Priam, who was his tributary."

In Ovid, the adjective *memnonius* is synonymous with *black*, and classical tradition, represented by Aiskylos and Ktesias, attributes to Memnon the construction of superb palaces. The excavations of M. Dieulafoy at

⁴ See Letronne, *Œuvres choisies*, publiées par E. Fagnan, t. II. p. 60 sqq.

Susa will, it seems, prove that these Greek and Roman fables have a serious historical foundation: an Ethiopian race, perhaps connected with the Trojans, ruled at Susa; and Memnon the Ethiopian is not simply a puerile conception of the Greek fancy. It will soon be scientifically established that this hero, like Nimrod, personifies a race, and that he must figure, on this account, in the first chapter of the history of ancient Oriental civilizations.

ERNEST BABELON.